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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEGUCIGALPA 000983

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/27/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFHO1: HONDURAS COUP SITREP #65 09/28/2009 AS OF
14:00 LOCAL (16:00 EDT)

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 979 AND OTHERS

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b and d)

Diplomatic Process

¶1. (SBU) Four members of a five person OAS delegation were denied entry at Toncontin International Airport on September 27, with U.S. Embassy officers present. Two of the diplomats were U.S. citizens. The fifth diplomat, John Biehl, was permitted to enter Honduras. Details on this incident will be reported septel.

¶2. (SBU) The Human Rights Officer at the Spanish Embassy informed Poloff that two Spanish diplomats accredited to Honduras and one family member were also denied entry at Toncontin International Airport on September 27 and departed on commercial flights.

Domestic Political Situation

¶3. (SBU) The de facto regime took significant steps farther away from democracy over the weekend of September 26-27, issuing a decree suspending constitutionally-granted freedoms of association, expression and movement for a period of 45 days, which leads up almost to the November 29 election date.

Details of the decree will be reported septel. Under the auspices of the decree, security forces shut down anti-coup television channel 36 and radio station Radio Globo.

¶4. (C) The Honduran National Congress will meet at 1400 local (1600 EDT) today, September 28 to discuss the decree. Third Vice President of Congress Ramon Velasquez Nazar said in a phone conversation with an Embassy employee that holding elections under the current decree would be "very problematic." Velasquez has been an outspoken supporter of the coup and the Micheletti regime to date.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador spoke with President Zelaya regarding the decree and the closure of the television and radio stations. Zelaya noted that the de facto regime had significantly increased the number of security forces around the Brazilian Embassy and had placed armed troops outside the

entrances to the closed broadcast stations.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador also spoke with regime Defense Chief Romeo Vasquez Velasquez to condemn in the strongest terms the decree, noting that in the regime's opposition to Chavez, they themselves were implanting an authoritarian state. The Ambassador expressed doubt that election campaigns could be held with such limits on freedom of association, speech and press, noting that nothing had taken place to justify such extreme measures, especially for such a long timeframe. The Ambassador added that the increasingly undemocratic actions were badly damaging the reputation of the Honduran Armed Forces, as well. Vasquez acknowledged the seriousness of the actions and said he would go back to the Micheletti leadership and seek to roll back the extreme measures.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador then spoke with former President Ricardo Maduro, repeating his strong objections to the weekend actions, in particular the decree. Maduro said the Micheletti team had been shaken by the surprise arrival of President Zelaya and the week's events, and had overreacted with this decree. He said the Micheletti team was looking for a way to back themselves out of the extreme position, but was finding it difficult in the highly polarized political environment, noting many of their staunchest supporters favored the decree. Maduro added the presidential candidates were working behind the scenes to roll back the measures, either in scope, duration or both.

Civil Unrest and Security Environment

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¶8. (C) Embassy sources in the security forces, the resistance movement and Zelaya's own circle informed Emboffs that pro-Zelaya organizers planned a major street action today, September 28. Sources claimed that Zelaya had authorized the use of violence by the crowd to force their way to the Brazilian Embassy in order to bring Zelaya to the Presidential Palace and reinstate him there. While Post notes such action seems unlikely to succeed, security forces and marchers are expected to be at an especially high level of tension and anticipation today. However, as of late afternoon, no such action had materialized.

¶9. (SBU) News reports on September 27 claimed that Wendy Elizabeth Avila died on September 26 after she was hospitalized for an asthma attack caused by tear gas at protests earlier in the week. Police officials confirmed the death of Avila to Emboff, however said only an autopsy could confirm the cause of death. Post will continue to follow this case closely.

¶10. (SBU) As of 1330 local (1530 EDT), a group of over 1,000 anti-coup demonstrators had gathered at the Pedagogical University and began marching toward the resistance "headquarters" at STIBYS, the beverage workers' union building near Toncontin Airport. Demonstration organizers have stated the group will then continue to the cemetery to participate in Avila's funeral. Demonstrations have so far been peaceful and without incident today, September 28.

Consular/ACS

¶11. The Consular Section is drafting a revised warden message informing American citizens of the de facto government's emergency decree.

Media Update

¶12. (SBU) The owner of anti-coup television Channel 36, Esdras Lopez and the owner of anti-coup radio station Radio Globo, Alejandro Villatoro, confirmed to the Ambassador on September 28 that in the early morning hours military entered both news outlets and disconnected their transmissions. Lopez and Villatoro told Ambassador that the soldiers had destroyed equipment, taken computers and other property from the offices. Villatoro reported that the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights Sandra Ponce arrived at the scene soon after the Honduran Military took over the station. However they would now allow Ponce access to the site

¶13. (C) Lopez had told Poloff on September 27 that in news programs on September 26 he was critical of the decision of the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights Sandra Ponce to leave Honduras for one week during such a serious time for human rights in Honduras. Lopez told Poloff that in retaliation, he received a call on September 27 from Ponce who described him as &intolerable& and said &she had lost her patience with me.& Lopez expressed concern to Poloff over such statements from the top official charged for protecting human rights in Honduras.

¶14. (U) The Honduran Media Association announced they will have an emergency meeting today, September 28 to discuss and announce a position on the emergency decree.

Embassy Operations

¶15. (U) The Embassy is open today, September 28, and will remain open unless a curfew is imposed. As of 1400 local (1600 EDT) no new curfew announcement had been made. (Note: official announcements have been made minutes before imposing or lifting curfews since September 21. End note)

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¶16. (SBU) All Mission employees and dependents have been instructed to remain within Tegucigalpa until further notice. No non-essential travel, either personal or official is authorized. All TDY travel into Honduras has been suspended for the week of September 28-October 2.
LLORENS